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Work / Life

NAVIGATOR

The Top 10 Telltale Signs of Burnout

Sometimes we don't recognize just how burnt out we are. We're so stuck that we don't realize we're immobilized. The dangers of burnout are manifold—there are costs to our careers, to our personal relationships, and to our bodies.

Here are 10 telltale signs of burnout—if you see yourself in at least 3 of the following, consider it time to reevaluate choices you've made. It may be time for an overhaul!

1. Boredom. If nothing excites you and you don't look forward to anything, life can feel mundane. If your performance is due to habit and not a result of inspiration, if you've forgotten what originally inspired you and you've lost your sense of passion, burnout could be a reason. If you're bored yet hardly notice it, you're in burnout.

2. Feeling grumpy and grouchy. If you've attributed your irritability to a midlife crisis or to hormonal changes, it might be time to reconsider! Burnout can show up as irritability when we're not fulfilled and not on a path of growth and development. Little things bother us, and we lose our perspective and focus. We forget our objectives and motivations; irritability robs us of our vitality, which in turn affects the energy of our actions.

3. The blues. If you're depressed on Sunday afternoon while thinking about Monday morning and about how much you dread returning to work, it's time for a change! Life's too short not to enjoy each day, and work represents more than making money.

4. Jealousy. Do you consistently compare yourself to others, questioning why Person X has the job that you'd like to have? Are you judgmental about others' performance and not focused enough on *your* areas that need improvement? Do you feel entitled or unappreciated? Beware the hidden signs of jealousy—underneath the jealousy might lurk unresolved and useless questions that lead down a nonproductive path! Although jealousy might appear to be about other people, it's primarily a reflection of one's own shaky self-worth.

5. Cynicism. Are you frequently cynical or bitter about your job, your boss, your company, or your spouse? Do you no longer care about their opinions? People who are cynical often don't give others the space to communicate and sometimes lack respect for others. Cynicism breeds cynicism—it's an endless and nonproductive cycle.

6. Fatigue. Do you frequently feel as if you have low energy? Are you always tired? Do

you spend the bulk of the day looking forward to your next break, to a nap, or to an escape? Do you look forward to nothing more than TV or a glass of wine or beer at the end of the day?

7. Feeling overwhelmed. Do the smallest details of life overwhelm you? Do you frequently feel that if one more project ends up on your desk, you're going to explode or crumble? Are you becoming oblivious in order to avoid feeling overwhelmed?

8. Lack of joy. Do you no longer find joy in what once made you smile or laugh? Have you lost your ability to empathize or to find beauty in a piece of art or nature? Can your heart be lifted by music, poetry, or a child's kiss?

9. Low productivity. If you feel as if you never have enough time and never accomplish your goals, you're a prime candidate for burnout. Low productivity, lack of outcome, and a sense that you'll never have enough time to do everything you need to do are wearisome and major factors of burnout. Break your goals into small, manageable steps so that you're able to accomplish small pieces easily. You'll be able to track and celebrate your progress. Success begets success! Build upon your progress step by step by step.

10. Loss of inspiration. Have you lost your muse or your inspiration? Are you no longer in touch with what motivates and stirs your heart? Loss of inspiration is often an unrecognized and underreported source of burnout. Recognize the role inspiration plays in your life.

If too many of the above signs of burnout resonate for you, consider yourself due for an overhaul! It's time to reevaluate your life and the choices you've made. Consider working with a professional coach to help you get on the path toward happiness and productivity. By recognizing the telltale signs of burnout, you've begun the first step toward rebuilding passion and productivity in your life.

(Source: Jan Gordon, LCSW, executive, career, and personal coach, *jan @ qualitycoaching.com*. Copyright 2000–2003, CoachVille, LLC.)

Note: For information about finding a coach, contact the Career Management Office.

THOUGHT DU JOUR

The Listening Company

Following is a corporate mission statement that elevates the power of listening. It is from the Schneider Corporation in Indianapolis, IN.

In our commitment to excellence,
we respond to client needs,
we listen,
we care,
we communicate,
we follow through;

we respond to employee needs,
we listen,
we care,
we communicate,
we follow through;

we respond to community needs,
we listen,
we care,
we communicate,
we follow through.

Excellence is listening, caring, communicating, and following through.

HUMOR

Bob Hope Classics

ON TURNING 70

"You still chase women, but only downhill."

ON TURNING 80

"That's the time of your life when even your birthday suit needs pressing."

ON TURNING 90

"You know you're getting old when the candles cost more than the cake."

ON TURNING 100

"I don't feel old. In fact, I don't feel anything until noon. Then it's time for my nap."

ON GIVING UP HIS EARLY CAREER—BOXING

"I ruined my hands in the ring . . . the referee kept stepping on them."

ON SAILORS

"They spend the first 6 days of each week sowing their wild oats; then they go to church on Sunday and pray for crop failure."

ON NEVER WINNING AN OSCAR

"Welcome to the Academy Awards, or, as it's called at my home, 'Passover.'"

"Winning isn't everything. If you don't place first, remember that it's the second mouse that gets the cheese!"
—Unknown

ON GOLF

"Golf is my profession. Show business is just to pay the green fees."

ON PRESIDENTS

"I have performed for 12 presidents and entertained only 6."

ON WHY HE CHOSE SHOW BUSINESS FOR HIS CAREER

"When I was born, the doctor said to my mother, 'Congratulations. You have an 8-pound ham.'"

ON RECEIVING THE CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL

"I feel very humble, but I think I have the strength of character to fight it."

ON HIS FAMILY'S EARLY POVERTY

"Four of us slept in the one bed. When it got cold, Mother threw on another brother."

ON HIS SIX BROTHERS

"That's how I learned to dance. Waiting for the bathroom."

ON HIS EARLY FAILURES

"I would not have had anything to eat if it wasn't for the stuff the audience threw at me."

ON GOING TO HEAVEN

"I've done benefits for *all* religions. I'd hate to blow the hereafter on a technicality."

HEALTH TIP

Sage, Lemon Balm, and Memory

Extracts of sage and lemon balm may help to improve memory and behavioral problems in people with Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia.

In controlled trials in normal volunteers, both extracts improved memory, and lemon balm improved mood. Lemon balm reduced agitation and improved quality of life in people with Alzheimer's disease. Sage had a significant effect on attention and behavior.

Millions of people worldwide suffer from dementia, which is characterized by memory loss and a progressive decline in thinking, comprehension, and judgment. Alzheimer's disease is the leading type of the disorder in the elderly. Alzheimer's is associated with the buildup of protein deposits called amyloid plaque and the accumulation of tangles in the brain. Drugs can alleviate symptoms, but there is no cure.

Sage has a longstanding reputation in British herbal encyclopedias as an agent that enhances memory in healthy young adults. Lemon balm is an herbal medicine that has traditionally been attributed with memory-enhancing properties, but it is currently more widely used as a mild sedative and sleep aid. Lemon balm can also help to relieve digestive upsets.

(Sources: Medical Conference, Liverpool, England, March 2004; *Pharmacology, Biochemistry, & Behavior* 75, no. 3 (2003): 669–674; *Neuropsychopharmacology* 28, no. 10 (2003): 1871–1881. Excerpted by Betty Kamen, Ph.D., and Michael Rosenbaum, M.D., at <http://www.bettykamen.com>.)

"Duct tape is like the Force. It has a light side, a dark side, and it holds the universe together."
—Carl Zwanzig

TECH TIP

Close That Window

Have you ever found yourself on the Internet when a full-screen advertisement suddenly pops up and you can't find the X to close it? Simply click once on the offending page, then hold down the "Alt" key on your keyboard and press the "F4" key. This will close the active window.

WEB SITE PICKS

<http://apps.collegeboard.com/myroad/navigator.jsp?t=351&i=homepage>

This site helps you or your kids discover a path to the right college or career. It has information on tons of occupations and includes minimum degree requirements, specialized training, estimated income, and job descriptions. If there is something in which you or your kids have an interest, but you're not sure how a job would compare to a hobby, this will help make that discovery much easier.

Plus, there are reviews of colleges and universities. You can search for information for a specific college, compare a few colleges of interest, or match your needs and character with a list of recommended schools. This is a great tool for all the parents out there starting down the college path with their teens. It's just as useful for the high school freshman who is looking for some direction or the college sophomore who has yet to declare a major. It's all about choosing the right path to your future!

WORDS FOR REFLECTION

Resignation

I am hereby officially tendering my resignation as an adult.

I have decided I would like to accept the responsibilities of an 8-year-old again.

I want to go to McDonald's and think that it's a four-star restaurant.

I want to sail sticks across a fresh mud puddle and make a pavement with rocks.

I want to think M&Ms are better than money because you can eat them.

I want to lie under a big oak tree and play doctors and nurses with my friends on a hot summer's day.

I want to return to a time when life was simple; when all I knew were colors, multiplication tables, and nursery rhymes, and it didn't bother me because I didn't know what I didn't know and I didn't care.

All I knew was to be happy because I was blissfully unaware of all the things that should make me worried or upset.

I want to think the world is fair . . . that everyone is honest and good.

I want to believe that anything is possible.

I want to be oblivious to the complexities of life and be overly excited by the little things again.

I want to live simply again. I don't want my day to consist of computer crashes, mountains of paperwork, depressing news, how to survive more days in the month than there is money in the bank, gossip, illness, and loss of loved ones.

I want to believe in the power of smiles, hugs, a kind word, truth, justice, peace, dreams, the imagination, mankind, and making angels in the snow.

So . . . here are my checkbook and my car keys, my credit card bills and my mobile phone. I am officially resigning from adulthood.

And if you want to discuss this further, you'll have to catch me first, 'cause . . .

Tag! You're it.

—Author unknown

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Sighs of the Heart

"We've been back to this animal shelter at least five times. It has been weeks since we started all of this," the woman told the volunteer.

"What is it your daughter keeps asking for?" she asked.

"Puppy size!"

"We have plenty of puppies, if that's what she's looking for."

"I know. We have seen most of them," she said in frustration.

Just then, the young child came walking into the office.

"Well, did you find one?"

"No, not this time," she said with sadness in her voice. "Can we come back on the weekend?"

The two women looked at each other, shook their heads, and laughed.

"You never know when we will get more dogs. Unfortunately, there's always a fresh supply," the volunteer said.

The young child took her mother by the hand and headed to the door. "Don't worry; I bet we'll find one this weekend," she said.

Over the next few days, both Mom and Dad had long conversations with her. They both felt she was being too particular.

"It's this weekend or we're not looking any more," Dad finally said in frustration.

"We don't want to hear anything more about puppy size, either," Mom added.

Sure enough, they were the first ones in the shelter on Saturday morning. By now, the young child knew her way around, so she ran right for the section that housed the smaller dogs.

Tired of the routine, Mom sat in the small waiting room at the end of the first row of cages. There was an observation window so you could see the animals during times when visitors weren't permitted.

The young girl walked slowly from cage to cage, kneeling periodically to take a closer look. One by one, the dogs were brought out, and she held each one. One by one, she said, "Sorry, you're not the one."

It was the last cage on this last day in search of the perfect pup. The volunteer opened the cage door, and the child carefully picked up the dog and held it closely. This time she took a little longer.

"Mom, that's it! I found the right puppy! He's the one! I know it!" she screamed with joy.

Mom, startled by all the commotion, came running. "What? Are you sure? How do you know?" she asked.

"It's the puppy sighs!"

"Yes, it is the same size as all the other puppies you held the last few weeks," Mom said.

"No, not size . . . sighs. When I held him in my arms, he sighed," she said.

"So?"

"Don't you remember? When I asked you one day what love is, you told me, 'Love depends on the sighs of your heart. The more you love, the bigger the sighs!'"

The two women looked at each other for a moment. Mom didn't know whether to laugh or cry. As she stooped down to hug her child, she did a little of both.

"Mom, every time you hold me, I sigh. When you and Daddy come home from work and hug each other, you both sigh. I knew I would find the right puppy if it sighed when I held it in my arms," she said.

Then, holding the puppy up close to her face, she said, "Mom, he loves me. I heard the sighs of his heart."

(Source: Bob Perks, author and speaker.)

"Happiness is not having what you want, but wanting what you have."
—Rabbi H. Schachtel

HEALTH AND HOME

Bathroom Biohazard?

A few months ago, I wrote about how simply washing your hands after using the bathroom—something only around two out of three people do routinely—can go a long way toward preventing illness and infection (Daily Dose, 11/19). Now, a recent study reveals another incredibly simple way to reduce your risk of infection from common bathroom germs and bacteria: wash your shower curtain.

That's right—believe it or not, your innocent-looking shower curtain or plastic shower-curtain liner is actually the bacterial equivalent of Mardi Gras—a decadent frenzy of microbial breeding and debauchery of potentially deadly magnitude. According to a *Nature Science Journal* online report, a curious University of Colorado microbiologist examined samples of soap scum scraped from five different shower curtains (including his own) and was horrified at the density and diversity of potentially harmful bacteria that teemed under his microscope lens.

More than three-quarters of the bacteria present in these five samples were classified as members of a pair of microbe "species" capable of infecting wounds or attacking the systems of those with less than optimum immunity—like many elderly folks or those taking any number of prescription medications. People on the antirejection drugs commonly taken after organ transplantation are especially vulnerable to these types of pathogens.

Though the bacteria are present in the soap residue, the study's researchers theorize that the bacteria are actually thriving on organic materials shed from our bodies during bathing, not on the soap scum itself—that just functions as a kind of "commune"

housing the little brutes. One of the study's leaders also suggests that synthetic compounds called plasticizers added to plastic shower curtain liners to make them flexible may feed these bacteria as well.

My advice? Install sliding glass doors on your shower—they're very likely to be less hospitable to bacteria in the first place, and it is easier to clean the soap scum off them. At the very least, you should launder or disinfect your shower curtain and liner (with bleach or hydrogen peroxide, preferably) every time you clean the bathroom.

(Source: Annie B. Bond,
<http://www.Care2.com>.)

FUN STUFF

Alternative Meanings to Some Well-Known Words

Arbitrator \ar'bi-tray'-ter\: A cook that leaves Arby's to work at McDonald's

Avoidable \uh-voy'-duh-buhl\: What a bull-fighter tries to do

Baloney \buh-lo'-nee\: Where some hem-lines fall

Counterfeiters \kown'-ter-fit'-ers\: Workers who put together kitchen cabinets

Heroes \hee-rhos\: What a guy in a row-boat does

Left Bank \left' bangk\: What the robber did when his bag was full of loot

Misty \mis-tee\: How golfers create divots

Paradox \par'-u-doks\: Two physicians

Polarize \po'-lur-ize\: What penguins see with

Relief \ree-leef\: What trees do in the spring

Selfish \sel'-fish\: What the owner of a seafood store does

Subdued \sub-dood\: Like, a guy who, like, works on one of those, like, submarines, man

Sudafed \sood'-a-fed\: Brought litigation against a Government official

FINANCES

How To Win in the Financing Games Retail Stores Play

Have you ever seen advertisements for "zero down payment and no interest for 12 months?" This is a very enticing way for stores to get you to make purchases. It is also a way to get you to spend more than you would if you were using cash. Twelve

months away seems like a long time, and if you are like me, you believe that you will have the money by the time the year is up!

Well, to take advantage of the 12 months with no interest and to win in the financing game, determine ahead of time how much money you want to spend. Do this by looking in your bank account at how much you have available *today* for whatever you are considering purchasing.

Once you have done that, you are ready to go shopping. Spend no more than you planned, and each month, make the minimum payment amount to the financing company. During the last month, call the financing company and ask for the payoff balance (make sure they don't include the interest charges in the amount). Then send in the final payment before the last month is over. Presto, a year-long loan free of any and all interest charges.

If you kept your cash in a money market or other mutual fund company throughout the year, you may have even made a nice profit at the retail store's or their financing company's expense.

WARNING: if there is any possibility that you won't be able to pay the loan off within the 12 months, then do not make the purchase. And if there is any chance that you will make even one *late* payment, do not make the purchase. Instead, keep saving money for your purchase and wait until you are sure you can pay it off within the 12 months. There might even be a better sale at a later date.

Note that some of the payment plans can turn into a revolving charge account for you at a particular store. Remember to read the fine print before signing up for anything. Don't be tempted to keep spending up to your credit line every time you pay your account down. Maintain your focus—to be debt free and financially smart with your money!

(Source: Doris Dobkins, money-saving expert and author of the book *Financial Freedom from A-Z*. <http://www.creativefinances.com>)

Questions/Comments to:

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